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# THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

## PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

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### THE NATURE OF FEELING<sup>1</sup>

#### I

SEC. 1. Dr. James Ward in his *Encyclopedia Britannica* article has called attention to four distinctly different meanings given to the term 'feeling,' it being employed as the equivalent of touch, of the organic sensations, of the emotions and of pleasure-pain. To this list I would add the use of the word to express what Ward would call mere presentation itself, *i. e.*, mere cases of psychic emphasis according to my terminology, cases of mere emphatic experience as such, which for the sake of brevity I shall usually speak of in what follows as mere experience. It is thus, for instance, that Professor James uses the word in his 'Psychology' where,<sup>2</sup> in searching for 'some general term by which to designate all states of consciousness merely as such,' he states his partiality for either 'feeling or thought'; and where again<sup>3</sup> he speaks of 'feelings of relation,' and tells us 'we ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, . . . quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold*.'

The fact that this word 'feeling' is thus employed would in itself make our problem sufficiently troublesome, but an indefinite confusion is added when we find writers using the term in different senses at different times, and without adequate warning to the student.

I have just quoted Professor James's usage of 'feeling' in his 'Psychology' as the equivalent of mere emphatic experience as such; but surely this is not what he means by 'feeling' in his 'Varieties of Religious Experience,'<sup>4</sup> where he tells us that 'in religion feeling is deeper than intellect.'

<sup>1</sup> Paper read before the American Psychological Association at its fourteenth annual meeting, at Cambridge, December, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I., pp. 185 and 186.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 245 and 246.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter XVIII., and Index reference.

Nor does Professor James stand alone in this rather reckless use of the term; a large proportion of our best psychologists must also plead guilty to the same indictment. To take a late instance: in the thirteenth chapter of his excellent 'Psychology,' Professor Angell uses the word feeling, as he says (p. 257), 'to designate in a general way those processes which represent and express the tone of our consciousness.' He does not give us any specific definition of the word tone, but he leaves us in no doubt by the context that he means by it the pleasure-pain aspect of our presentations. Yet he at once adopts the word affection as a synonym of feeling, and the word affection certainly has an emotional twang. Beyond this, while he happily separates his treatment of feeling as pleasure-pain as widely as possible from his treatment of the emotions, nevertheless we find in these later pages many expressions which seem to indicate that emotion and feeling are identifiable: as, for instance (p. 327), 'the peculiar feeling which marks each emotion off from other emotions is primarily due to the different reactions which various objects call forth'; (p. 337) 'when we speak of sympathy we sometimes mean to indicate a definite feeling which has many characteristics of emotion,' 'the moral feeling of obligation or the feeling of conscience affords a further instance of our emotional psychoses.' In this last case it may be that feeling is used as the equivalent of mere experience, as it appears to be where he speaks in this connection of 'the feeling of dependence' and of 'feelings of reverence and of faith.'

Our psychological masters having thus set the example, it is natural to find the writers of the rising generation following them with even less care to restrict the meaning of the word. In late numbers of one of our psychological journals we find a serious article concerning feeling, in the body of which we find feeling identified with affection, emotion,<sup>5</sup> and passion;<sup>6</sup> again, with pleasure and pain;<sup>7</sup> and again, with mere experience, in such expressions as 'I feel a conscious restraint,'<sup>8</sup> 'my anticipatory feelings,'<sup>9</sup> etc.

It seems to me that this is a favorable opportunity to enter my vigorous protest against this nefarious practice on the part of my fellow psychologists, and as I am calling attention to a real difficulty I may perhaps be allowed to suggest a means of avoiding it which I find effective. It is simply this: when I mean emotion or passion and nothing else, I use the words emotion or passion, and not the

<sup>5</sup> This JOURNAL, Vol. II., p. 618.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, 646.

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, 647.

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, 647.

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, 648.

word feeling; when I mean pleasure-pain I use the phrase pleasure-pain, and not feeling; when I mean mere experience, I use some other word or phrase than feeling. When one has followed this rule he is surprised to find how seldom he actually needs to employ the word feeling; when it is necessary to use it, then I find it to have a signification which I shall attempt to explain later on. To be sure such a procedure as I thus recommend deprives us psychologists of a word we are all fond of, and would result in the abandonment of many essays which in the preliminary writing would under such a rule appear to be inconsequent and inconsistent, but in the end I am convinced that our generous sacrifice would tend to true advance.

If I have hostile critics in this company I am going to insist that they follow this rule in their attacks upon me, and I am convinced that in so doing I shall be found to have spiked most of their guns.

Sec. 2. Let us now briefly consider the five usages above noted.

The common man may use feeling to refer to touch and to the organic sensations, but the psychologist at once finds himself avoiding this usage. We must agree that we shall be bound in the end to ask how it happens that the term is thus applied by the common man, but it is very evident that feeling itself is fuller and deeper than any special type of the sensations.

In like manner we are bound in the end to ask how it happens that we so often employ the term feeling when we mean to speak of mere experience; but I do not think that any special student of this subject will deny that there is a psychic somewhat which we may and do designate as feeling, which is not mere experience as such, but a very specific kind of experience, and it would thus appear that if we are to apply the word to this very specific type of experience we are not justified in employing it when we refer to experience in general.

Sec. 3. Turning now to the use of the word feeling to refer to the emotions and to pleasure-pain, it may be well to note that we can not allow ourselves to assume any form of total or partial identification of the emotions and pleasure-pain. The emotions, one and all, are psychic coincidents of instinctive reactions of the organism as such; they are a special type of what we may call instinct-experiences. But certainly neither pleasure nor pain as such is the psychic correspondent of a reaction of the whole organism upon its environment, as becomes apparent when we consider that very simple forms of impression upon us may give us keen sensational pleasure or pain. The most we can say is that our emotions are usually distinctly pleasant or painful; but even to this rule there are notable exceptions, as in the case of the usual forms of surprise, which is clearly

an emotion, yet is one that is usually classed as indifferent. It appears thus that in the analysis we are to make we must consider separately the application of the term feeling to the emotions and to pleasure-pain.

Sec. 4. That a large number of highly intelligent people habitually identify feeling with their emotional experiences is clear. The artist and critic of art for the most part use the word in this way; for them the man who 'feels things' is one who is keenly susceptible to nice changes of emotional reaction. But careful consideration surely serves to show that feeling is something quite different from emotion.

I think it will be generally agreed that what we mean by feeling is very closely related with pleasure-pain. But if, as we have just said, the emotions are not to be identified with, or are not developed from, pleasure-pain, with which feeling is thus closely related, then feeling must be in some sense broader than the emotions. Beyond this, the emotions are reactive experiences, and as such are only very indirectly influential in relation to the flow of thought; while feeling is appreciated as more than an immediate reactive experience, and as very directly influential in relation to the flow of thought. It is a well-recognized fact, for instance, that feeling greatly influences belief. But it can not be said that our emotions in themselves directly influence our beliefs; when they influence them at all they do so indirectly through the arousal of this feeling which is liable to appear in connection with some of them, but not with all of them. Love, fear and anger thus indirectly influence belief, but, so far as I can see, such emotions as surprise and *ennui*, for instance, do not.

So it would appear that what we mean by feeling is not emotion, although clearly emotion is liable to carry feeling with it, if we may so speak.

Sec. 5. When we turn to consider the identification of feeling with pleasure-pain, we meet with questions which require more careful study. Dr. James Ward speaks of pleasure and pain as 'feeling proper,' and as in this position he is in accord with a large number of eminent psychologists, one who ventures to express unqualified dissent from this view, as I am compelled to, can not do so without caution, nor without acknowledging at once that the fact that this notion is maintained by men of keen insight implies that we find in pleasure and pain a very clear exemplification of the special mental qualification of the state which we may properly designate as feeling; and this, as we shall presently show, turns out to be true.

If pleasure-pain is 'feeling proper,' then it would seem either (1) that all the special mental forms which we naturally speak of

as phases of feeling must be distinctly pleasant or painful; or must be summations of pleasures and pains; or else, (2) pleasure-pain is the simplest form of feeling, and in our complex life develops beyond this simple form into something radically different from pleasure-pain. Let us consider each of these hypotheses as briefly as may be.

Sec. 6. The first hypothesis need not delay us, for it is perfectly obvious that many of the special mental forms which we commonly speak of as feelings are neither appreciated as distinctly pleasant nor as distinctly painful, nor even as algedonic summations; but are often so thoroughly lacking in pleasure or pain that they are described as completely indifferent. Clearly the mass of the sensations of touch determined by the clothing I am now wearing can not be claimed to be either pleasant or painful, they are entirely indifferent; the same is true of the great body of organic sensations which I may note in attention at this moment if I choose to do so; and it is as certainly true of a vast proportion of the psychic items which I have described as mere emphatic experiences as such.

And turning to the emotions with which feeling is so often identified we find the same situation, for it certainly can not be said either that all of them are pleasant or painful, or that they always appear as pleasure-pain summations. For, as I have already said, surprise, which is clearly an emotion, is usually indifferent,—so notably indifferent, in fact, that Bain takes surprise as the best example of what he calls ‘neutral excitement.’

It seems to me that we must grant that when we sift matters down we find that what we mean by feeling is really a special form of presentation, meaning by this term a special psychic emphasis,—a peculiar and significant mental item: and that as such it is qualified by pleasure-pain, as all presentations or specific mental items are.

But it is just as clear that other mental items, our sensations of taste, for instance, which are not types of feeling at all, are also qualified by pleasure and pain: and this fact in itself suffices to prove that feeling and pleasure-pain can not be identified.

Sec. 7. We may pass then to the consideration of the second hypothesis, *viz.*, that pleasure-pain is the simplest form of feeling, and that in our complex mental life it develops into mental forms which are radically different from itself.

This view seems to be that very generally accepted by those who hold that in pleasure-pain we have ‘feeling proper,’ although they treat the whole question with such vagueness that one can scarcely be too confident in this regard. At all events, I am able to find no other hypothesis to justify their position, and it is one the acceptance

of which is not unnatural for psychologists who in their youth were deeply influenced by the teachings of the associationists and who thus became accustomed to treat the doctrine of mental chemistry with more respect than was its due.

But upon careful examination we do not find this second hypothesis in any measure satisfactory. Touch and the organic sensations and the emotions, to which the term feeling is so commonly applied, while often noticeably pleasant or painful, vary very much from time to time in their algedonic qualification; the self-same sensations and emotions are sometimes pleasant and sometimes painful. And clearly this variation of pleasure-pain qualification could not occur without any noticeable change in the essential nature of the mental states referred to if the pleasure or the pain were of their very essence.

And turning, finally, to that mere emphatic experience as such to which the term feeling is often applied, we may note, as we shall see later, that there is some little ground for the assumption that this mere experience is developed out of what we have a right to call feeling. But to argue that this mere experience is developed out of pleasure-pain as 'feeling proper' involves at the outset a begging of the very question just here at issue, *viz.*, whether pleasure-pain is 'feeling proper'; in favor of which position I am unable to discover any evidence whatever.

Feeling, as I have said, is a special presentation or mental item; and it is to be granted that it is one in connection with which pleasures and pains of marked form are commonly given, but there is no more reason for holding that feeling is itself a pleasure-pain development than there is for holding that presentations other than feeling, all of which are also algedonically qualified, are developed from pleasure-pain.

## II

Sec. 8. We have thus found that we gain no satisfactory result by an attempt to discover the essence of feeling in any one of those special mental items to which the common man applies the term in every-day speech. Our study of the problem, however, certainly suggests that this feeling is distinctly noticeable in connection with all the special mental forms we have been thus considering, and we are naturally led, then, to ask whether there is any psychic characteristic which is peculiarly marked in connection with the special mental states to which the term feeling is so commonly applied.

Such a characteristic I find in what we call 'subjectiveness'; and in using this word we express the fact that the mental states referred to bear very close relation with that special presentation which we

describe as the ego of self-consciousness—the empirical ego—the every-day self of the common man.

Sec. 9. Let me at first ask you to note how true it is that this subjectiveness is involved with each of those mental items which are commonly described as types of feeling.

We have noted that in careless speech we often identify feeling with touch and the organic sensations. In such cases I think we usually use the word feeling to refer to mere emphatic experience as such, to which usage we refer below. But apart from this, touch and the organic sensations are closely associated with the body, with which in turn, as all recognize, the sense of subjectiveness is closely associated. In other words, touch and the organic sensations are not naturally considered to have any extrinsic or objective connotations, as is the case with sensations of sight and hearing. That it is for this reason that the common man thus applies the term feeling is made clearer when we note that so soon as the psychologist comes to look upon touch and the organic sensations as objective to the ego of self-consciousness, he finds no more tendency to apply the term feeling to them than to any other of the sensations, *e. g.*, sight or hearing.

Our emotions, which are so often spoken of as feelings, are notably subjective, as involving the reaction of the whole psychic system upon perceptual states.

The most frequently noted characteristic of our pleasures and pains, which Ward and others speak of as ‘feeling proper,’ is certainly their subjective reference.

And finally when we use feeling to refer to mere emphatic experience as such—when we say we feel cold, or feel despondent, for instance—we refer to what is inherently appreciated as our own, and disconnected from the field of presentations, which are identified with the field that is objective to the empirical ego.

Sec. 10. The thesis, then, which I present for your consideration is this: that the experience which the psychologist properly describes as feeling is a certain form of presentation, a certain special psychic emphasis, which is vague and elusive in its content, but which when more clearly defined develops into what we call the empirical ego, or the every-day self of the uninstructed man. The ‘feeling attitude’ is the attitude of the empirical ego not yet become explicit.

Sec. 11. It is, of course, impossible in the few moments still at my command to present to you the full evidence favorable to this view; it will appear in a book I have lately finished. But the thesis is so simple that it will be easily carried in mind, and I shall ask those interested to note, first, that an analysis of the empirical ego

and of feeling discloses the same general characteristics in each, although these are less distinctly given in feeling, as under our theory we should expect would be the case; second, that, on the one hand, the action of presentations within the field of attention in relation to feeling is found to be like that in relation to the empirical ego; third, that, on the other hand, the efficiency of feeling in relation to the presentations within the field of attention is markedly similar to the efficiency of the empirical ego in relation to these same presentations. For instance, the effect of feeling upon belief is almost identical with the effect of the empirical ego upon belief in states of self-consciousness. But, as under my view, feeling is less explicit than the empirical ego we are prepared to find no evidence of voluntary efficiency in relation to belief until the feeling develops into the more explicit empirical ego, which is given in the field of attention as the agent in the act of will.

Sec. 12. One point referred to above I must mention here. Consciousness in my view is a vastly complex systematized psychic mass, in which during our active life psychic emphases occur which are commonly spoken of as presentations. These psychic emphases, or presentations so called, must, of course, appear as arising out of this complex psychic mass.

If any indefinite systematized psychic mass, narrower than the psychic mass as a whole, can itself appear as a presentation or psychic emphasis, we shall have in it a simulacrum of the whole broad, systematized, psychic mass out of which our normal flow of psychic emphases or presentations appears to arise.

But under our hypothesis feeling is just such a minor, indefinite, systematized psychic mass which, as a whole, appears as a presentation or psychic emphasis. We are, therefore, not surprised to find that careful introspectionists, like Horwicz, for instance, have been led to hold that in feeling we have the fundamental psychic situation out of which all forms of psychic emphasis or presentation arise.

Sec. 13. In conclusion, I may be allowed to refer very briefly to certain views of important psychologists of which I have not spoken thus far.

Dr. James Ward, and in this particular he represents many others, tells us that in his experience 'feeling intervenes between sensory and motor presentations,' is 'a purely subjective state, at once effect of a change in receptive consciousness, and the cause of a change in motor consciousness, and *is not in itself a presentation*': that 'feeling as such is, so to put it, matter of *being* rather than of direct knowledge.'<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica article, p. 67. (Italics mine except in case of word 'being').

In my view this statement is inaccurate. When I speak of feeling as I have above, as a presentation of a certain form, I mean, of course, that it is given as a presentation to the non-presentable Self. That feeling is a presentation in this sense I do not think Dr. Ward could deny. What Dr. Ward apparently means to indicate in the above quotation is the fact that in states of self-conscious reflection feeling does not appear as a presentation to *the empirical ego*, but breaks away from this presentation and attaches itself firmly to the empirical ego itself, or loses itself in the empirical ego, or appears as absorbing the empirical ego. This is clearly in accord with my own introspection, and it is as evidently corroborative of the thesis here presented; for under my theory feeling is subjectiveness pure and simple, and this means that as the empirical ego becomes explicit feeling necessarily attaches to, or is resolved into, this empirical ego.

Sec. 14. That the doctrine of those who follow Dr. Ward has failed to carry conviction is evidenced in the fact that some of our ablest psychologists have in late years rejected it, and have suggested others, which, however, appear to me to be equally unsatisfactory. Two of these, those presented by Professor Wundt and by Professor Royce, seem to demand our serious consideration.

Professor Wundt looks upon feeling as a complex state which varies in three directions: (1) as to pleasure-pain; (2) as to excitement-depression; (3) as to tension-relief.

Now, as we have already seen, feeling does display pleasure-pain very markedly; but if Wundt's position is to be defended it would seem to be necessary to show in relation to his first 'direction' that all pleasure-pain is feeling, and this, as we have seen, can not be maintained. Of the second of Wundt's 'directions,' it is to be said that excitement-depression is a distinctly emotional series, and as such is, as we have seen, of necessity closely bound up with the empirical ego, and therefore under our view with feeling; but, as we have already shown, in itself, as emotional, it can not be held to be of the essence of feeling. In Wundt's third 'direction'—tension-relief—we have a series which conditions the appearance of emotional states, of which we have just said all that is necessary; but surely in tension-relief itself we have, so far as I can see, no essential or unique qualification of feeling as such.

In turning to Professor Royce's theory,<sup>11</sup> I am inclined to apologize for the few words devoted to it. But this brevity is accounted for partly by the limits of time at my command, partly by the fact that what I have already said concerning Wundt's theory applies in part to Professor Royce's, but mainly by the fact that Professor Royce does not claim that his theory is more than tentative. He

<sup>11</sup> 'Outlines of Psychology,' pp. 177 and 178.

holds that 'our feelings differ from one another in at least two decidedly distinct and relatively independent ways,' first, as to their pleasantness and unpleasantness, and, second, 'as being more or less either feelings of restlessness or feelings of quiescence.'

As to the first point, what I have said above of the relation of feeling to pleasure-pain will suffice. As to the second point, it is to be noted that feelings of restlessness and quiescence are special emotional states (if the latter can be called a special mental state at all), and as such are, as we have seen, not of the essence of feeling as such.

Finally, I may say a word in reference to the relation between this thesis and esthetic theory in which I am especially interested.

We must assume, I think, that no theory will be upheld by careful thinkers unless they find in their experience an explicit or implicit corroboration of their view. The esthetic experience of an appreciative person in the presence of a great work of art might well be described as a resolution of consciousness into pure feeling. As I see a great Rembrandt or hear a Beethoven symphony, I am overwhelmed, and in retrospect find my state of mind difficult to state in terms of normal experience. But all will agree that the state given is one of feeling, a state of saturated feeling, one might call it. And, as such feeling, it is given as a mental item, or 'presentation,' as we say. At the same time self-consciousness seems to disappear. In the moment of my ecstasy feeling is there, but I do not appreciate *myself* as feeling. Nor does my ego appear as discriminating. Beyond this the object which brings the feeling state becomes of no importance. I care not who painted or who composed, nor do I care through what means or by the emphasis of what elements the glorious result is gained. Self-consciousness is dissolved away and in its place we have as a psychic emphasis that mere psychic mass which under my view is identical with feeling, and which is, as I hold, of the nature of the empirical ego not yet explicit.

We thus have in my view the experience upon which is based that general movement of thought—with which I may say, by the way, I do not find myself in sympathy—which from its germ in Kant developed through Schiller, and Schelling, and Hegel, and which looks to esthetics—to the realm of beauty—for a reconciliation between the outer world and inner consciousness—between nature and the self—a view which finds its latest interpretation in Miss Puffer's 'Psychology of Beauty,' where we are taught that 'the beautiful object possesses those qualities which bring the personality into a state of unity and self-completeness' (p. 49), the nature of beauty being 'in relation of means to an end; the means, the possibilities of stimulation in the motor, visual, auditory and

purely ideal fields; the end, a moment of perfection, of self-complete unity of experience, of favorable stimulation with repose.'

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## THE TERMS 'CONSCIOUS' AND 'CONSCIOUSNESS'

IN an early number of this JOURNAL<sup>1</sup> I gave a brief account of the historical evolution of the significations of the term 'idea' in the English language. I wish now to consider the terms 'conscious' and 'consciousness'; not, however, so much with reference to their historical development as to the different types of meaning they represent and convey. I think this discrimination will be found not altogether irrelevant to current problems and discussions. I take my material again from Murray's Oxford Dictionary.

1. An early use emphasizes the 'con-' factor: a social fact. Consciousness means joint, or mutual, awareness. "To be a friend and to be conscious are terms equivalent" (South, 1664).<sup>2</sup> While this use is obsolete, it persists in poetic metaphor as attributed to things, *e. g.*, the 'conscious air,' etc. It also clearly influences the next sense, which is,

2. That of being 'conscious to one's self': having the witness to something within one's self. This is naturally said especially of one's own innocence, guilt, frailties, etc., that is of personal activities and traits, where the individual has peculiar or unique evidence not available to others. "Being so conscious unto myself of my great weakness" (Asher, 1620). Here is a distinctively personal adaptation of the social, or joint, use. The agent is, so to speak, reduplicated. In one capacity, he does certain things; in another, he is cognizant of these goings-on. A connecting link between 1 and 2 is found in a sense (obsolete like 1) where conscious means 'privy to,' a cognizant accomplice of,—usually, a guilty knowledge. It is worth considering whether 'self-consciousness,' in both the moral and the philosophic sense, does not involve this distinction and relation between the self doing and the self reflecting upon its past or future (anticipated) doings to see what sort of an agent is implicated; and whether, in short, many of the difficulties of self-consciousness as a 'subject-object' relation are not due to a failure to keep in mind that it establishes connection between a

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I., No. 7, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> I owe to the Editor of the JOURNAL this interesting reference to Hobbes ('Leviathan,' ch. VII.): "When two, or more, men know of one and the same fact, they are said to be conscious of it one to another; which is as much as to know it together." Hobbes then uses this to explicate the moral meaning of conscience.